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KGB Defector Wasn't; And While Talking to U.S., He Kept Secrets,
Files Show

By RUTH SINAI

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — On April 6, 1953, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover went ballistic. Life Magazine, which hit the stands that day, revealed that a former general in the Soviet secret service had been living undetected virtually under Hoover's nose for almost 15 years.

Through subsequent questioning by the FBI, CIA and Congress, Gen. Alexander Orlov came to be portrayed as the highest-ranking Soviet ever to defect to the United States. He also came to symbolize staunch anti-Communist fervor, as reflected in a eulogy in the Congressional Record upon his death in 1973.

Now, newly opened KGB files reveal that Orlov was neither defector nor anti-Communist. In their book "Deadly Illusions," British and Russian authors use the Soviet files to show that Orlov remained a dedicated Communist to his death, although he feared and hated Joseph Stalin's regime.

In fact, Orlov decided to expose Stalin's brutality in a serialized book published by Life, knowingly risking exposure to the FBI, co-author Oleg Tsarev said in an interview.

The files also show that rather than defecting to the United States, Orlov fled here fearing Stalin would kill him, but never revealed the important secrets he knew so as not to betray the Soviet revolution and the spies he had recruited.

FBI files, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, confirmed to authors John Costello and Tsarev the authenticity and basic thrust of some KGB documents. And Costello, a respected author and lecturer on espionage history, says former U.S. intelligence officials have privately confirmed the book's basic facts.

The FBI and KGB files also show that Orlov never revealed to Americans the extent of his espionage work in Europe, and never tipped them to the existence of Kim Philby and other notorious British spies who belonged to a spy ring he ran in the 1930s before he fled.

Costello and Tsarev, a former KGB agent, were given access to the Soviet files under an agreement between Crown Books and the successor of the KGB, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service.

Theirs is the first of five books planned under the 1992 agreement.

"This book begins to lay the foundation for serious Cold War intelligence history," said Timothy Naftali, an intelligence historian at Harvard University's John N. Olin Institute.

Until now, histories of the Cold War could only rely on documents made available in the West, said Naftali, who under the Crown agreement will be given access to KGB files for an upcoming book on the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the effect of U.S. and

STAT Soviet intelligence on those tense days.

P9057

Wed Jun 23 00:24:31 1993

Page 2

The Russian decision to selectively open intelligence files appears to have been prompted both by a need for money and a desire to have the KGB go down in history as a legitimate espionage agency rather than as a tool for internal repression of dissent.

Costello and Tsarev believe that in the process, the Russian openness puts the CIA and the British intelligence service to shame.

History, Costello noted in an interview, is usually written by the victors. Yet the Russians, who essentially lost the Cold War, are now shaping some of that definitive history by opening their files, albeit selectively, he said.

The CIA has promised to declassify documents of historic interest and also has released information requested in FOIA applications. But both processes take years, and much material is still blacked out.

The British are even stricter, arguing that one disclosure leads to another and then to a slippery slope of revelations that would compromise intelligence and diplomatic operations. ``The British government still doesn't understand that just because you lose your virginity doesn't mean you become promiscuous,'' Naftali said.

The British were miffed about certain revelations in ``Deadly Illusions'' regarding the so-called Cambridge spy ring of Philby, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean _ which Orlov ran. Orlov planned for Philby to assassinate Francisco Franco during the 1936 Spanish civil war, but the operation was called off, Costello said.

The files also show that Maclean, who defected to Moscow in 1951, provided the Soviets with many more British documents than were known until now, including ones about British spying on the United States and about the U.S. nuclear weapons program.

Yet Orlov never revealed to the FBI and CIA the extent to which Maclean had compromised U.S. and British secrets, and his silence about Philby allowed the Soviet spy to operate undetected until 1963 when he defected.